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BOOK REVIEWS



IN CHARGE OF
M. E. CAMERON

CONFESSIO MEDICI. By the Writer of "The Young People." The Macmillan Company, New York.

Under this title an unknown author gives us a collection of essays, any one of which may be read without reference to that which goes before or the one following. We venture to declare however that no one having read a single page would be content to lay down the book until he had read every word from cover to cover.

The "Confessio" is a declaration of faith in medicine or rather in the practice of medicine; and the author speaks whereof he knows. From "Vocation" to "The Very End," the titles of the first and last chapters in the book, one feels that the writer has gone over every inch of the way and could go over it blindfold at shortest notice, or the most unexpected call. And the reader feels quite an intimate acquaintance with the unnamed author, who some way identifies himself with all the really great men we remember in the practice of medicine.

Like Dr. Osler, he advises all medical students to read "Middlemarch," making it the test of vocation. If Lydgate's life, says our author, does not touch you—you may well be in doubt of having had a call to be a doctor.

The second essay, "Hospital Life," though written to medical students, will go straight to the heart of every nurse who reads it; and very callous and world hardened will she be if it does not give her as sharp a bout of homesickness for her early hospital days as she has ever experienced. The author believes convincingly in the "*genius loci*" of the hospital,—the spirit of hospital life, which demands of us our best gifts of heart and mind,—gifts which seem so little to those who possess them but so unattainable to those who come without them. The author lists them handily. "Those gifts which come of a good disposition, a good home, and a good public school." "Moreover," he says, the student "should have reverence, and a fair liking for work and a certain simplicity or directness of thought, and should know Latin and a certain manageable quantity of general facts; and should be resolute in company and even against company to say the right thing and take the

right side." Every one, apparently, who possesses these modest gifts is admitted to the brotherhood, or community of the hospital. "Every hospital is a charity" (thus our author) "but there is a difference between charity and hospitality. They who give money to hospitals are charitable; we, who have the spending of it, are hospitable; and, of course, it is we who get the fun out of the money. And we spend it well, entertaining in good style our innumerable guests. All of us, staff and students, sisters and nurses, residents, lecturers, and officials, work together, keeping open house." The picture of this oasis in the desert of a big selfish, heartless city life is so admirably drawn that one lingers over it,—seeing again so many of our own experiences,—the times when the whole world seemed wrong some way and the uselessness of working to make things better, and then again the better times when we realize "the courage and patience of our guests." Our guests who are to leave us presently, carrying away the opinion that "we are a very decent lot, especially Sister." The essay, "A Good Example," gives a short but delightful sketch of the life of Master Ambroise Paré, a very learned man and the chief of all surgeons of Paris in his time which extended over a long period of the sixteenth century. This man, noted as well for his piety and good works as for his skill and success in his profession, is indeed worthy of the attention of every young student who seeks the milestones on the road to success. Great was his courage and even greater his skill in nursing when that art seems to have been suffered to disappear. He it was who discovered that it was not necessary to dress gunshot wounds in *boiling oil*, that an unguent of his own compounding,—after the receipt of a famous Italian surgeon,—"oil of lillies, young whelps just born, and earth worms prepared in Venice turpentine," could be used in its place. He it was also who discovered the merciful use of the *ligature* instead of the red-hot iron to stop the bleeding from amputation. A great man in any age, but so very great in his own time that we wonder at the carelessness and forgetfulness that has allowed his name to become buried so far from sight to-day.

The essays on Practice, there are three of these, keep the same hold on the reader as those that have preceded them. Always there is the same insistence on the cultivation of character, the indispensableness of courage, the tremendous advantage of simplicity of purpose. We learn how little use to men in practice is the cultivation of a knowledge of art,—not that the practitioner may not enjoy appreciative glimpses into other worlds than his own, but because of the selfishness of the sick human that insists upon the elimination of everything in the man who is its doctor except what concerns his own particular ailment and its cure. "The spirit of practice does not readily enter into a life which is full

of furniture. It must have opportunity for its influences; it cannot write on walls which are covered with pictures, or make its voice heard above music and much talking; the life must be clear, affording space, and observing silence."

The essay on "Retirement" shows us our author supported by a sweet and sound philosophy through the most trying epoch in life. The last essay, "The Very End," faces the future with the courage and hopefulness which grow out of this same philosophy and we read the epilogue regretting keenly the necessity that such delightful books may not be continued indefinitely. The epilogue comes like a "grace after meat,"—a little expression of thankfulness for a life of hard work and exceeding satisfaction closing with the following words:

"The natural dignity of our work, its unembarrassed kindness, its insight into life, its hold on science,—for these privileges, and for all that they bring with them, up and up, high over the top of the tree, the very heavens open, preaching thankfulness. Circle above circle, the reasons for it are established, out of the reach of words."

THE MOTHER'S YEAR BOOK. By Marion Foster Washburne. The Macmillan Company, New York. Price, \$1.50 net.

The problems of the first year of childhood are very practically discussed in detail by an author who has presumably noticed how very deficient most books of advice to young mothers usually are, in little points, which are supposed to be supplied by common sense, in the mother or attendant. As a matter of fact common sense is very apt to overlook very small matters such as the exact degree of warmth in the cradle of a baby, the little individual traits that appear, in even a day old infant, as a dislike to lying on the right side or the left, the adjustment of the tiny garments, etc. The book is arranged in monthly parts for the first year of the baby's life, with an appendix on the care of the eyes of the newborn. Too many mothers are obliged to learn by experience the best method to care for their children; and it is only too commonly that we hear such expressions as "if I had known with my first baby, what I have learned *from* him, he would be a different child," or "I ruined my eldest child's disposition trying to find out how to treat him." Mrs. Washburne gives as good instruction on all these little points as is possible to receive, and as nearly as possible takes the part of actual experience. The book is smartly bound in blue and white, the cover decorated with a "bambino" in swaddling clothes, and contains plates of some of the most touching and beautiful pictures of the Madonna and Child.